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AUTHOR Garbarino, James
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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter examines the human ecology of school crime. It explores the relationship between the structure of the school as a social system and the dynamics of student and staff behavior. The central thesis is that schools become "out of control" when they are large and serve academically marginal or socially alienated students. The potency of the school as a support system for prosocial behavior is examined in the light of evidence linking school size to depersonalization of student-staff relationships, a shift toward impersonal methods of social control, and noncontingent feedback on both prosocial and antisocial behavior. (Author/MLF)

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THE HUMAN ECOLOGY OF SCHOOL CRIME*

James Garbarino

The Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth Development

A paper from
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the human ecology of school crime. It explores the relationship between the structure of the school as a social system and the dynamics of student and staff behavior. The central thesis is that schools become "out of control" when they are large and serve academically marginal or socially alienated students. The potency of the school as a support system for prosocial behavior is examined in the light of evidence linking school size to depersonalization of student-staff relationships, a shift toward impersonal methods of social control, and noncontingent feedback on both pro- and antisocial behavior.

Introduction

On April 20, 1977, the United States Supreme Court announced a widely publicized decision in Ingraham v. Wright affirming the right of the local school districts to permit corporal punishment. The dominant response among the many educators who acclaimed this decision was that schools need the threat of corporal punishment to maintain discipline and order, even if they never actually use physical force in the classroom or in the principal's office. Why do teachers and administrators feel they need to have the option of physical punishment? At least part of the answer, it seems, is that there is a widespread and growing feeling that America's schools are "out of control," or rather that schools are being controlled by the "wrong" persons and social forces. These include criminal elements in the youth population, student alienation, and inadequate socialization practices in the home. The most serious aspect of this problem is the feeling that schools have been taken over by forces inimical to discipline, order, security, and education.

Public opinion polls reveal increasing public concern about discipline and order in schools (Gallup, 1975). Teacher turnover is so high in some areas that only 20 percent of an entering cohort of teachers remains after five years in the profession. Costs have risen so fast that localities are hard-pressed to keep pace. Strikes and

desegregation programs have accentuated the sense of schools being out of the control of ordinary citizens. The mass media report dramatic incidents of crime in the schools: a teacher is raped, a student killed, a student extortion ring exposed.

Those are the extreme events that receive public attention. The more mundane and pervasive problem of school crime is the petty destruction of property and personal insult that are a fact of day-to-day life in many schools. These are the behaviors that flourish in an atmosphere where prosocial influences are on the defensive, where there is passive complicity by the majority, and where there is little self-control by students. They, rather than dramatic felonious crime, are the focus of discussion. They present the most basic and pervasive challenges to our social system (Wilson, 1976). The goals of this paper are (a) to examine the problem of school crime as an element in the larger issue of schools "out of control," and (b) to examine the dynamics of this problem from the perspective of an ecological model of human development.

Schools: Out of Control

In what sense are schools "out of control?" The issue of self-control is currently emerging as a central concern of applied psychology (e.g., Kanfer & Goldstein, 1975; Krumboltz & Thoresen, 1976). At stake is the ability of a person to maintain control over the conditions that

reinforce his or her behavior. Loss of control is a challenge to mental health and social functioning. To cite but one example, the maltreatment of children is linked to "lives out of control" (Garbarino, 1977). Neglect is a "passive" response, i.e., the collapse of any attempt to provide adequate caregiving. Abuse is an active response, i.e., attempting to assert some control over part of one's life (the child) as an expression of a general lack of control in the other aspects of one's life. The extensive research literature on internal vs. external locus of control documents the importance of self-control in overall social competence (Rotter, 1975). Successful interventions designed to restore personal control over reinforcing contingencies have been reported in a variety of behavioral domains (Kanfer & Goldstein, 1975; Krumboltz & Thoresen, 1976).

Of equal and perhaps greater importance in the present context, however, is the issue of <u>institutional</u> self-control. Do those responsible for meeting institutional goals have the ability to achieve those objectives? Is effective authority commensurate with responsibility? Just as individuals may resort to desperate and extreme means to assert control in situations where it seems to be threatened, so institutional personnel may respond in an extreme fashion to the loss of control. As a society we seem plagued by inadequate self-control. National goals are set, but go unmet. A host of socially self-defeating trends (including

street crime) continue unabated, despite our protestations. Lack of social self-control is dangerous. The problem of school crime is symptomatic of the more general problem of inadequate institutional self-control. Clinging to the threat of corporal punishment is but one manifestation. The neglect and abuse of "difficult" students is another (Edelman, 1974). Understanding school crime requires that we first answer the question: Why are schools "out of control?"

The answer is twofold. First, we don't adequately understand the relationship between context and behavior. Second, we in the United States demonstrate a fundamental cultural ambivalence where matters of collective responsibility and group action are concerned (Garbarino, 1977). These two inadequacies are at the root of the social problem of school crime. Because both reflect the interdependence of human systems, school crime becomes more comprehensible and susceptible to remedy when viewed from the perspective of an ecological model of human development.

This model, as elaborated by Bronfenbrenner (1977) and others, contains four propositions of interest in the current discussion.

1) There is no validity to the concept of "context-free" or "pure" human development. Issues of social policy and practice are intrinsic, not tangential, to the study of human development. This has particular

relevance to United States schools because of their emphasis on narrowly defined academic development and their neglect of broadly defined social development.

2) School crime is best understood as the absence of "social habitability." As such it is an indicator of the quality of life within the schools, and indeed in the larger society. Our individualistic, laissez-faire approach to social relations blinds us to the importance of efforts to create and maintain a social climate in our institutions that actively promotes prosocial behavior. Rather than seeing the problem entirely as one of stopping school crime, we must see the importance of creating a social climate in which school crime will not exist. Currently, schools are an excellent growth medium for school crime. In our analyses we must recognize that defining the role of the school goes beyond empirical documentation of what "is." We must be able to conceptualize the potential impact of alternative forms not yet in existence (in our culture at least). Historical forms may also provide alternative models relevant to present concerns. This perspective warns us against accepting the often expressed view that schools don't "account for much of the variance" in important outcomes. When viewed from the perspective of cross-cultural, historical, and philosophical comparisons we find a high degree

of uniformity in our schools. We can hardly expect what differences do exist to account for a great deal of the variance in behavioral outcome. Nonetheless, there is evidence that existing differences in schools are associated with significant differences in the level of pro- and antisocial behavior of students (McPartland & McDill, 1976; Wenk, 1974).

3) Like all significant human phenomena, school crime is a multiply determined developmental outcome. It derives from the ongoing, mutual accommodation and adaptation of organism and environment. The environment is conceived topologically as an interrelated set of systems at the macrolevel (e.g., government), mesolevel (e.g., neighborhood), and microlevel (e.g., family). Many of the most important factors are those that operate outside interpersonal dyads to influence, even control, behavior. These influences may be termed "second-order" effects, and include, for example, the impact of television upon the interaction of parent and child, and the role of a teacher's presence in shaping the behavior of two students. The central concern here, of course, is with those second-order effects that shape interactions having the potential to become perpetrator/victim dyads. These effects are particularly important to understanding and controlling school crime because many of the solutions "obvious" to us, such as security

guards in schools, may have undetermined and possibly adverse second-order effects upon student/student, student/staff, and staff/staff relationships.

4) A sound model for understanding and controlling school crime must focus on the intersection of personal biography, social structure, and history. This confluence of developments establishes the context in which any specific proposal or event must be tested and evaluated. The "question" is always changing, therefore; any "answer" must contain flexibility.

School Crime as a Second-Order Effect

The foregoing discussion of an ecological model of human development directs our attention to the importance of social history in creating the second-order effects that shape, even control, in-school behavior. For the purposes of our discussion, four hypotheses may be proposed to identify an insidious pattern of second-order effects that make schools vulnerable to antisocial behavior as much as, if not more than, other institutions and behavioral settings. These hypotheses build a case against recent historical trends in school size, enrollment patterns, structure, and organization. These trends play into the hands of broader social developments which, when combined with the development of the schools themselves, produce the current school crime problem. These hypotheses can become the basis for our

discussion of causes and solutions.

1. School crime is encouraged by the inceasingly impersonal social climate of the schools, particularly of the secondary schools. The origin of this climate lies in the trends toward large schools, curricular specialization, and a narrow concept of the school's social responsibility that gives inadequate attention to "character development." Research on social climate has found that optimum environments offer "a combination of warm and supportive relationships, an emphasis on specific directions of personal growth, and a reasonably clear, orderly, and well-structured milieu. These environments have a high expectation and demand for performance" (Moos, 1976, p. 323).

2. The school's impersonal social climate results in inadequate observation and monitoring of student behavior. The key is the lack of <u>personal</u> feedback, without which the schools cannot function as support systems for prosocial behavior.

3. The trend toward an impersonal social climate in schools complements trends in the social history of youth that cause large numbers of academically, economically, and socially marginal students to be retained in schools, where they may become a disruptive force.

4. School crime is the result of an insidious combination of historical trends that has increasingly weakened the effective authority of school staff, has divorced the school from the community, has created stress and incompatible goals, and has generally reduced the manageability of schools as social systems. The result is that schools are increasingly out of the control of those charged with the responsibility for managing them and under the control of antisocial influences. This is the climate in which school crime flourishes.

These four hypotheses direct our attention away from the perpetrator/victim dyad (the typical psychological orientation) and toward the forces that establish the context in which that dyadic relationship is created and maintained. What are the underlying principles in this analysis? There are two. First, the social rather than academic agenda of the school has the greatest impact on student behavior (Garbarino, 1975). Second, the key structural characteristic of the school as a social system is the degree to which adolescent peer groups are organized around prosocial goals, are involved with adults in structured activities, and are positively reinforced for cooperative behavior.

The sufficient conditions for school crime are multiple. They are dealt with in the vast literature exploring the dynamics of crime in general and juvenile delinquency in

particular (Wenk, 1974). The school itself can be one of those sufficient conditions when it stimulates aggression, frustration, and hostility. The social climate of the school is more important, however, as a necessary condition for school crime. This distinction, between necessary and sufficient conditions, is crucial for both comprehension and intervention (Bronfenbrenner & Mahoney, 1975; Garbarino, 1977). The necessary condition for school crime is a social climate that permits the perpetrator/victim relationship to be created (by the multiple sufficient conditions) and to persist (through the apathy and/or impotence of students and staff). Our task is to identify the factors that bring this necessary social climate into existence. The crux of the matter is the school's ability to function as a "support system" and thereby provide feedback and resources to students and staff.

The concept of support system has been developed and elaborated upon by several investigators, among them Gerald Caplan (1974; Caplan & Killiea, 1976). In his terms, a support system performs several critical social functions that are relevant to the school as a social context, acting as

> ...continuing social aggregates that provide individuals with opportunities for feedback about themselves and for validations for their expectations about others, which may offset deficiencies in these communications within the large community context....

> People have a variety of specific needs that demand satisfaction through enduring interpersonal relationships, such as for love and affection, for intimacy that provides the freedom to express feelings easily and unself-consciously, for validation of personal identity and worth, for satisfaction of nurturance and dependency, for help with tasks, and for support in handling emotion and controlling impulses. (emphasis added) (pp. 4-5)

> They tell him (the individual) what is expected of him and guide him in what to do. They watch what he does and they judge his performance. (Caplan, 1975, pp. 5-6)

The structure, policies, and organization of schools contribute materially to their ability to function as support systems. These relationships are nowhere better revealed than in the role of school size in shaping social climate. School size is an excellent illustration of the processes by which alienation, apathy, and anomie (and their behavioral correlates) arise as psychological adaptations to a socially inadequate setting. Examining these phenomena will expose important features of the human ecology of school crime.

Many investigators have examined the impact of size upon the social dynamics of the secondary school.[1] McPartland and McDill (1976), for example, have reviewed some of the evidence relating school size to school crime. They focused on the mediating factor of "responsiveness" (defined in terms of access to "governing decisions," the

[1] Indeed, a recent literature search identified 344 articles pertaining to the general topic of school size published in the last 15 years.

costs of misbehavior, and the rewards for desired behavior). In their analysis a small but significant relationship was demonstrated favoring the small school. Plath (1965) reported a case study of a school that reduced the number of incidents of serious student misconduct from 120 to 9 following subdividion of a large high school (enrollment 3000) into a number of smaller schools.[2]

Other investigators (e.g., Barker & Gump, 1964; Baird, 1969; Wicker, 1969) have consistently reported that large schools tend to discourage meaningful participation in the social activities of schooling and a sense of responsibility, particularly among academically marginal students. Small schools are a better psychological investment than are large schools. Why? . Social activities are critical to the social system of peer relations (Coleman, 1961) and, therefore, to the development of identity, as opposed to alienation. These activities provide a potential complement to the academic agenda of the school. They permit a wide variety of students to succeed and thereby develop a sense of involvement in, responsiblity for, and commitment to the school. Without this climate of widespread responsibility, school crime can flourish.

Dreeben (1968) made this function of "extracurricular" activities the focal point of his analysis of schools.

[2]Alternatives to the size change hypothesis must be entertained, of course, including the bugaboo of educational innovation, namely the Hawthorne Effect.

> Alternatives to academic performance give the pupil a chance to succeed in achievement oriented activities even though he may not be able to do well in the classroom. How these alternative activities differ from those of the classroom is as important as the fact that they do differ, as evidenced by the case of athletics. Competitive sports resemble classroom activities in that both provide participants with the chance to demonstrate individual excellence. However, the former--and this is more true of team than individual sports--permit collective responsibility for defeat, whereas the latter by and large allow only individual responsibility for failure.... A similar contention holds for music and dramatics. Both provide this potentiality for individual accomplishment and recognition without the persistent, systematic, and potentially corrosive evaluation typical of the classroom.... In all these situations, either the rigors of competition and judgment characteristic of the classroom are mitigated, or the activity in question has its own built-in source of support and personal protection, not to the same extent as in the family, but more than is available in the crucible of the classroom. (pp. 72-73)

Getzels (1974) noted a number of discontintuities between school and family. One is the different emphases on "universalism" versus "particularism."

> Rights and obligations are determined on impersonal rather than personal grounds. In the particularistic relationship the important question is who is involved; the the universalistic relationship the important question is what is involved. (p. 223)

It seems clear that schools tend to be "universalistic" in that functional considerations are primary. The tension between universalistic versus particularistic relationships is worthy of consideration in the present context. Clearly, there is a basic difference between family and school in this matter. But the degree of this difference may be important to our understanding of the impact of school

structure upon the ecology of school crime. What are the factors that influence a school to emphasize particularistic concerns in addition to universalistic one? School size is one important factor.

Large schools promote universalistic (impersonal) conditions, while small schools can promote particularistic conditions. What are the consequences? Based on our previous analysis, we might speculate that, whereas small schools make reasonable demands on adolescents to adjust between universalistic and particularistic influences, large schools are excessively universalistic and treat students instrumentally (Burns, 1968). This is clearly the message of Barker and Gump's (1964) research (which generally parallels findings from a wide variety of social settings, e.g., work groups, play groups, etc.).

When looked at broadly, school size can have an impact on the "character development" of the student (Garbarino, 1973). Specifically, large schools tend to exert a negative influence on the character development of most students by depriving them of important experiences in participatory roles. Such experiences are essential for effective socialization to adulthood (Garbarino, 1977) and, most relevant to the present concern, for orderly social relations.

Barker and Gump's group (1964) found that, although the larger school has more settings in which students can act, there are proportionally more people to fill those settings.

For example, the large school may have both a chorus and a glee club, but it is still harder to get into either than it is to be a part of the single vocal group of a smaller high school. Students in larger high schools participated less frequently in activities than did their counterparts in smaller schools. Further, they participated in a smaller variety of activities and settings. Only a small, elite group can be genuinely active and "needed" in a large school.

The kinds of satisfactions derived from participation differed in small versus large schools (Barker & Gump, 1964). Students from small schools reported satisfactions that clustered around the development of responsibility, competence, challenge, and a sense of identity. Students from the large schools emphasized vicarious enjoyment, being part of a large crowd and generally experiencing what the investigators termed a "herd feeling." The small schools encouraged active participation, the large schools passivity.

Importantly, it was found that large schools discriminate particularly against "marginal students," those who have difficulty academically, score lower on IQ tests, and come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Such students in the large schools were excluded from active participation; they were superfluous. In the small schools such students were genuinely needed to maintain the activities and functions and, therefore, were actively included rather than excluded

on the ground of their marginal competence and social desirability.

Not surprisingly, marginal students in small schools were more active and displayed a stronger sense of responsibility for and toward the school and its activities than did their large-school counterparts (Willems, 1967). The large school breeds passivity and irresponsibility as a student (and staff) adaptation to an unresponsive environment. Leaders in small schools are not somehow "nicer," and for that reason include the marginal students in activities. Nor are the leaders in the large schools inherently snobbish. Rather, the characteristics of the situations themselves make the marginal students "needed" in the small school and "superfluous" in the large school. This "psychological" finding is of social importance because school success has become ever more important for economic and social placement (Garbarino, 1975). Indeed, the inclusion of ever larger numbers of marginal students intensifies the importance of size. Moreover, as marginal students have been increasingly retained in school, the likelihood of their "finding" one another and forming educationally and socially deviant peer groups likewise increases.

There is additional evidence available from other sources to expand and extend these findings (e.g., Grabe, 1975). Baird (1969) replicated Barker and Gump's finding concerning rates of participation in extracurricular activities

as a function of school size. Wicker (1969) and Kleinhert (cited in Turner & Thrasher, 1970) conducted similar analyses, with similar results: large schools were found to discourage participation in the social activities of the school.

Since any discussion of policy implies financial considerations, it is necessary briefly to digress to consider the matter of cost effectiveness. The issue of school size tends to be associated with questions of cost effectiveness, the assumption being that larger schools are economically more efficient. Turner and Thrasher (1970) reviewed the evidence bearing on this question. They proposed and answered the question underlying these discussions: What is the optimal size for high schools given financial efficiency, psychological development and educational quality?

Turner and Thrasher concluded that there is a size beyond which the economic virtues of largeness are not significantly enhanced and the psychological costs are substantial. The investigators propose that the optimum size for a secondary school lies somewhere in the range of 700 to 1,000 students. Other investigators have argued for a smaller size. Rosenberg (1970), for example, concluded that the best range is 400 to 500 students. Within this range both economic and psychological economies appear to be addressed.

There is a point at which schools become "large" and beyond which point the damage to social climate appears to be relatively constant. This is crucial because much of the research on school size assumes a simple linear effect, and often includes no genuinely small schools in the design, only relatively small ones. "Optimum size" addresses the question of financial efficiency, a matter that is foremost in the minds of many charged with the responsibility for educational administration. A purely "social" or "psychological" answer (based on Barker and Gump's results plus the replications cited) would certainly argue for somewhat smaller schools than a strictly economic one.

This is an important point. More important, however, is the need to adjust any "optimum" figure in light of student characteristics. As the academic marginality of students increases optimum school size decreases. As youthful alienation increases because of historical trends toward age segregation, stressful family relations, and disrupted socialization (Bronfenbrenner, 1975), the need for small schools increases. A proper accounting of the costs involved in school size must now include its impact on school crime. If it can be documented that small schools can reduce vandalism, the need for security measures, institutionalization of delinquent students, and other aspects of the school crime problem, their fiscal wisdom will be enhanced.

To recapitulate, large schools tend to promote alienation by depriving students of opportunities for participation in "extracurricular" activities. Such activities are just the ones that are vital in the peer-oriented social system of adolescents. This effect of largeness is aggravated for those who are academically marginal, and therefore already predisposed to alienation as a response to failure. What we have then is a human ecology in which the structure of the immediate setting (the high school) seems to have an important impact upon the attitudes of students and upon their behavior. The issue is that of social identity versus alienation.

In sum, large schools appear to generate alienation from academic authorities by inhibiting the kind of interaction that generates social identity, the integration of self, and group interest that leads to prosocial behavior and a sense of personal responsibility for the collective good. In place of such interaction large schools offer undifferentiated collectivities. For students in general, but particularly for the academically marginal student, the large school produces a cutting off of allegiance, a self-protective severing of identification. The social consequences of this psychological response include a pervasive lack of collective responsibility in which school crime can flourish.

This effect is not the whole story, however. School size is part of a larger ecological "conspiracy." Structural issues tend to be associated with questions of size. Blyth, Simmons, and Bush (1977), for example, found that grade cohorts in junior high schools (grades 7 through 9) were uniformly and substantially larger than grade cohorts in extended elementary schools (grades kindergarten through 8). In the city they studied there was no overlap in the distribution of sizes between the two types of schools. For the present purposes, however, the most important finding was that the level of victimization (including robbery, physical beating, or theft in or around school) was substantially higher for seventh graders in the junior high schools (42 percent) than it was in the extended elementary schools (25 percent). Anomie was higher and participation lower among the junior high school seventh graders as well. Just as issues of school structure and size tend to be confounded, so also are school and community size.

For both the school and the adult community, bigness implies an instrumental and impersonal orientation in interpersonal and institutional relationships. Such an orientation is likely to generate alienation in both settings, city and school. Barker and Gump (1964) note this parallelism:

> In general, the schools and communities were harmonious: the small communities, like the small schools, provided positions for functional importance for adolescents more frequently; and the cities, like the large schools, provided such positions less frequently. The data provide no evidence that the urban environments of the large schools compensated by means of their greater resources and facilities for the relatively meager functional importance of students within their large schools. (p. 198)

Working together, the large city and the large school form a consistent human ecology dominated by impersonalized, instrumental interactions (Barker & Gump, 1964; Barker & Schoggen, 1973). The alienation of youth is generated in both systems. The problem of school crime is truly an ecological one. It results from a "conspiracy" of large systems that preclude adequate personalized feedback and support and, in so doing, both stimulate and permit antisocial behavior.

The Ideological Problems Facing American Schools and their Relation to School Size

Why are schools big? Schools could be small. But there are two ideological reasons why they seldom are. First, the emphasis of educational experts on primarily "cognitive" academic curricula has led to a concern for and interest in the "power" of large schools, their ability to provide diverse intellectual resources for students (Conant, 1959; Jackson, 1966). Concern for the social issues involved in school size seems to have been lacking, even

absent. It was assumed that the primary issues were "academic"--which they may have been in the 1950s when the major drive to eliminate small schools gathered momentum. An analysis by Heath (1970) highlights this point.

> Central to academic improvement was the belief that excellence required a major structural change in the size of the school. To provide comprehensive education that included diverse and specialized courses, better facilities, and guidance services, many states mandated the consolidation of small schools into large schools. In Pennsylvania, for example, small high schools of 400-600 students that unquestionably offered high-quality education were forced to merge to create high schools of several thousand students. (p. 301)

The development of American educational institutions--indeed all institutions--has not operated under an assumption of high priority for smallness. There is a thrust toward bigness in the life of Western societies (Schumacher, 1973). "Enrollments" in all institutions have been "allowed" to grow in a generally haphazard and unplanned manner, with little or no consideration given to the impact of such growth upon social dynamics. This is particularly true of schools. In the cases where planning has existed (e.g., development of central schools), it has been in the direction of promoting largeness. In the United States largeness has generally been accepted, and even welcomed under the assumption that big schools mean diversity, power, and opportunity for educational specialization and differentiation.

Burton Clark (in Coleman et al., 1974) points out that one aspect of largeness not usually recognized is the

depersonalization of staff. The result is a bureaucratization of staff relations and the need to have teachers organize and be organized.

> Public School teachers have had a weak professional standing and considerable status insecurity; and, as they feel stifled by bureaucracy and vulnerable to lay intervention, they have reasons beyond economic gain to organize themselves as a militant interest group. (p. 79)

A related matter is the finding that large schools suffer in a generalized fashion by becoming bureaucratized and inflexible. The Rand Corporation (1974) reviewed the available evidence and found:

> There is a positive correlation between size of system and degree of centralization.... Large educational bureaucracies and large numbers of rules decrease innovation and adaptation. (p. 105)
>
> Innovation, responsiveness, and adaptation in school systems decrease with size and depend upon exogenous shocks to the system. (p. 173)

This finding was echoed by a Ford Foundation Report, A Foundation Goes to School (1972), which concluded that "Small schools changed faster than large ones." This greater flexibility was attributed to the greater impact of individual effort. It also had the effect of making the long-term consequences of innovation more dependent upon the continued activity and presence of the individual leaders. Controlling school crime requires above all else a personalized social climate. The ability to be flexible and responsive to change is an important attribute of the

small school. While this potential is not always fulfilled, of course, it is a resource to be built upon programmatically.

Large schools generate and sustain impersonal systems of social control (Wynne, 1975). They resort to bureaucratized means for observing and reinforcing student behavior. At present, when the forces promoting prosocial behavior see themselves in jeopardy, this is unfortunate. Crime in general flourishes in a climate where there is little personal responsibility, accountability, and contingent consequences for specific acts. School crime is no different (Wilson, 1976).

Winston Churchill once made the following observation: "We shape our surroundings and then our surroundings shape us." Moos (1976) calls this the principle of "progressive conformity." It is vital to keep this in mind because it cautions those who live in "small" social settings (small towns, small schools, etc.) to be wary, on the one hand, of too harshly judging their counterparts in "large" settings, and on the other it warns them against assuming that they can retain their "niceness" and "goodness" if they allow their social environments to become large. Staff become "inflexible," students alienated, and the social climate depersonalized in response to increasing school size. This seems to have happened throughout America during the 1950s and 1960s as small schools disappeared in favor of large ones. Recent research on the attitudinal response of

adolescents to their schools as social settings illustrates this phenomenon.

In the course of studying the adolescent experience of schooling, Buxton (1973) found an attitude of resentment concerning school structure and policy.

> ...very strong attitudes among many students: They do not like being treated alike; they come close to despising the pass system; they would like more choice about what to study and when to study it; they think there are too many rules; they would like more decision-making power; they do not feel the school has to have such strict controls; and they are rather against-schedules. (pp. 113-114)

This finding is from schools in suburban, mainly middle- and upper middle-class communities. As such it represents the typical pattern of depersonalization brought on by large suburban (and urban) schools (Blyth, Simmons & Bush, 1977). The students' responses to the specifics of academic life are clearly negative. A recent New York State Commission on Education commissioned a study of student alienation (1970). The study indicates that, statewide, "50 percent of the students will either drop out physically or remain in school as a mental drop-out" (p. 59, emphasis added).

Our analysis of school size illustrates the ecological proposition that the essentail criterion for evaluating schools is the "match" of social climate to student characteristics. Where the students' intrinsic commitment to the school is low, the ability of the social climate to elicit involvement is vital for order to prevail. This inverse relationship is repeated many time in analyzing the human ecology of school crime.

In addition, a personalized social climate can significantly affect the attitudinal response of students to staff demands by offering the "compensation" of individuation and flexibility. For example, demands that are acceptable in a small context because of its intimacy may be viewed as oppressive and authoritarian in the depersonalized large setting (Schumacher, 1973). Schools rely on morale for their effective operation. It appears, however, that student morale has been on the decline, probably due in some measure to the trend toward large schools. This trend parallels the spread of academic disorder. The New York State Temporary Commission to Study the Causes of Campus Unrest (1972) found that:

> While the major problems of secondary unrest are in the larger metropolitan centers, the relationships and similarities of our findings in the cities in the area of unrest equally apply to the hundreds of other schools in the State. (p. 7)

The findings referred to include the relationship between unresponsiveness and disorder, between large schools and academic turmoil.

The schools mirror the rest of society in this repect, and are part of the larger problem of alienation. Alienation in United States society derives from the isolation of ages, individuals, and institutions from each other. The isolation of school from community is particularly severe (Bronfenbrenner, 1975).

> During the past decade, the trend toward segregation of the school from the rest of society has been rapidly accelerated by the other forces of social disorganization.... As a result, the schools have become one of the most potent breeding grounds of alienation in American society. For this reason, it is of crucial importance for the welfare and development of school age children that schools be reintegrated into the life of the community. Above all, we must reverse the present trend toward the construction and administration of schools as isolated compounds divorced from the rest of the community. Many schools are becoming quasi-penal institutions in which teachers are increasingly forced to function as detectives and guards with pupils being treated as suspects or prisoners for whom liberty is a special privilege. (p. 672)

There can be no genuine freedom in schools unless there is a climate of order and security (Wolfgang, 1976). There is no genuine freedom in a prison or on a battlefield, and the problem of school crime threatens to turn some schools into a combination of the two. To understand and to solve the problem we must focus on the second-order effects that allow victim/perpetrator relationships to arise and persist. The foregoing discussion reveals that the social structure of the school can play a significant role (as a second-order effect) in the interpersonal benavior of students and staff. What remains is to translate this analysis into a series of guidelines for preventive and remedial action to inhibit school crime by strengthening the social fabric of American schools.

From Understanding to Intervention

There are three key policy questions:

1) How can we organize schools to maximize social control, particularly where marginal students are concerned?

2) How can we generate and sustain a social climate in schools that serves to motivate students to perform prosocial behaviors, and, in so doing, use the prosocial majority to control antisocial subgroups?

3) How can schools be protected from victimization by persons not part of the schools themselves?

The answer to all three of these questions is to be found in enhancing the role of the school as a potent, prosocial support system. We must make schools more effective in providing personal observation and feedback, in contingently reinforcing behavior, and in providing genuine opportunities for significant participation. Only by paying systematic attention to the social climate produced by school structure, size, and goals can behavior in student/student, teacher/student and victim/perpetrator relationships be effectively regulated. There is an alternative to schools in which crime is unchecked; however, that alternative requires some changes in our thinking about what is important in a school. The following four goals state these needed changes. Together they outline a strategy for combatting

school crime that promises a humane alternative to schools "out of control," and yet does not establish a police state within the classroom.

1. Create situational demands for participation. This is important if students are to develop a sense of responsibility for what goes on in the school. As we have learned from the problem of crime in general, law enforcement can be effective only when it has the support of the indigenous citizenry. The application to school crime is clear: reinforce responsibility in the student as "citizen." This is particularly important for the marginal student, whose academic citizenship is always in question.

2. Create a social climate in which personal observation, accountability, and feedback flourish. There is no substitute for the "cop on the beat" in the community at large. Likewise, there is no substitute for enduring, personalized relationships between staff and students (Moos, 1976). Schools must operate as support systems (Caplan, 1974; Caplan & Killiea, 1976).

3. Strive for heterogeneity. Heterogenous settings encourage individualization and individuation. Individual responsibility is a key element in establishing a climate inhospitable to school crime. Moreover, heterogeneity permits the use of peer groups for prosocial ends where the social balance favors prosocial attitudes and behaviors (Feldman, 1974).

4. Arrange the contingencies to reinforce positively social competence and prosocial behavior. Where are the rewards in the school as a social system? Are they for individual success or for collective success? Are they for keeping one's nose clean or for being one's brother's keeper? Is good citizenship positively rewarded?

These four goals imply a systematic assessment of the school as a social system. Moreover, they imply the need for small schools. Small schools make the attainment of these goals feasible, even given the immense problems students bring with them to school. The human ecology of school crime is dominated by two complementary forces, to wit, depersonalization of the schools themselves through excessive size (Garbarino, 1973), and a general pattern of inadequate social identity (Bronfenbrenner, 1975). The school can do little to combat directly the problem of alienation, although it can cooperate with other agencies. What the school can do, however, is to attend to issues of size and structure that can return a significant measure of control to prosocial forces. Small schools, emphasizing the creation and maintenance of enduring personalized social networks enmeshing students and staff, can be a great factor in the prevention and control of school crime.

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